

THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER YEAR

MARTHA OSTENSO



W.N.U. SERVICE

SYNOPSIS

The little town of Heron River is eagerly awaiting the arrival of Anna ("Silver") Grenoble, daughter of "Gentleman Jim," formerly of the community, but known as a gambler, news of whose recent murder in Chicago has reached the town. Sophronia Willard, Jim Grenoble's sister, with whom the girl is to live, is at the depot to meet her. Sophronia's household consists of her husband, and stepsons, Roderick and Jason. The Willards own only half of the farm on which they live, the other half being Anna Grenoble's. On Silver's arrival Duke Melbank, shiftless youth, makes himself obnoxious. Roderick is on the eve of marriage to Corinne Meader, daughter of a failed banker. Silver declares her eagerness to live on the farm, and says she has no intention of selling her half, which the Willards had feared.

CHAPTER III—Continued

Rapidly he took stock of himself. It was three years now since he had been graduated from college, and although he still clung jealously to what he had learned there, the soil had taken him back to itself again. He had worked the Grenoble land since he was fifteen, and had vowed that some day it would be his own in fact. And now—

Roddy brought his car to a stop in the little garage beside the barn, and climbed out of it. He walked slowly through the starlit darkness up the path to the house.

He let himself in through the back door and struck a match, found the lamp and lit it. Odd, he thought, but he could have sworn he had heard a footstep in the front hall. He moved through the house and saw a white-faced girl standing in the hall with one foot on the first step of the stairway. She had a flowered, thick robe wrapped tightly about her, and she carried a flashlight and a pair of slippers. Her hair hung to her shoulders, and was soft and pale and wavy, and her eyes were, in that startling moment, enormous.

Silver was the first to speak. "I suppose you are Roddy Willard," she said almost breathlessly. "Yes," he said, and came forward with his hand outstretched. "And you are Anna Grenoble, of course." He tried to relax his mouth into a smile, to check his agitation. "Yes," she said, smiling faintly. "I only just heard—in Heron River—about what happened to your father," he said haltingly. "I'm terribly sorry."

Silver stood with one hand on the balustrade and gave him a shadowy look. "Thank you. I—" Her voice trailed away. "I couldn't sleep—so I went for a walk—down to the old house. I—I didn't expect to be caught prowling." She gave him an odd look, half apology, half defiance. "Good night," she said. "Good night."

Sleep was out of the question. Roddy went back to the kitchen, turned the lamp low and stepped out the back door. The delicate bitterness of coming harvest filled his nostrils when he drew a deep breath. In a few days he would be a married man—and Corinne Meader established in the house of a farmer who looked into the future with blind eyes.

He found it difficult to believe that Jim Grenoble's death had coincided so nearly with his asking Corinne to marry him. It was almost like rust coming on the eve of reaping.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD noon of the next day, Sophronia and Silver stood together on a crest of the gentle ridge which supported the new farmstead. The girl had her hands in the pockets of her white linen dress, and her eyes, which Phronie had ascertained were a very dark blue, were fixed upon the old house down below. Phronie followed her glance, and saw that old Roderick had placed a ladder against the north wall, and with an armful of shingles and tools had begun the ascent of the roof.

"Tell me, Phronie," Silver asked suddenly, "are you moving into the old house because Roddy is getting married, or because I am here?"

"Because you are here?" Phronie was indignant. "I never heard the like! Roderick and I always said that as soon as either of the boys gets married, back we go to the old place. Young people have a right to start out by themselves, I always hold."

Silver was silent for a moment as she thought over what her aunt had said. "I'm glad," she mur-

mured at last. "I was afraid—perhaps—"

"Afraid of what?"

"I thought maybe Roddy's wife might not approve of me—because of dad."

The angry red sprang into Sophronia's cheeks. "She won't approve of me, neither, then—I'm Jim's sister, Corinne Meader ought to be glad she's got a home to come to, if I know anything. And I don't think she'll be fool enough to listen to every Tom-Dick-and-Harry's yarns. And if she does—let her! Jason'll stay with them in the new house, 'cause he fixed up his own room in the attic there just the way he likes it—with a skylight an' all for his funny oil paintin'. Jason's a queer one—but he won't bother Corinne, unless she can't stand him and his mouth organ."

"You said something about 'yarns,' Phronie," Silver said. "Do you mean things that fellow at the station last night has said about me?"

Sophronia hesitated for a moment. "Well, there's no use tryin' to hide from you what you'll find out for yourself anyhow, sooner or later. You know what people are, just as well as I do. When they've got nothing to do, they'll talk. Did you see that Duke Melbank when he was in Chicago this summer?"

"Dad said he came into our place one night, but I don't remember seeing him. So many people used to come and go."

"Well, he ain't worth rememberin'. But he has been talkin' since he came back."

Silver laughed ruefully. "Was he talking about dad?"

"Well—mostly about you."

Color rushed into Silver's cheeks. "About me? What does that creature know about me?"

Sophronia smiled reassuringly. "Some people talk most when they know least. As far as I can make out—the boys have been tellin' me—Duke don't say so much, but he hints plenty. There was a friend of Jim's, wasn't there? A fellow by the name of Lucas, I think."

"Gerald Lucas," Silver said, with her eyes fixed upon the downward slope of the hill. "I met him six months ago—two months ago—I thought I wanted to marry him."

"What manner of fellow was he?" Phronie asked, conversationally.

"Gerald used to practice law out West, but he got into some sort of trouble and was disbarred. Now he's against the world—and the world is against him."

Sophronia nodded sagely. "I guess I understand. Them outcasts appeal to women. I'm glad you got away from him without anything worse happenin'."

Silver's eyes darted to her aunt's face. Her heart sank. Sophronia was of another world, a good woman, placidly taking it for granted that her niece was still virtuous. Over the bleak loneliness that welled up within her, Silver resolved that it was better not to disillusion Phronie. After all, she need never know.

"Yes," Silver said breathlessly, looking away. "I might have married him. That would have been worse. But I told dad how I felt about him—and I knew as soon as I had told him that I'd rather die than marry Gerald. I can't explain it to you, Phronie. When I was away from him, I almost hated him. But as soon as he came back I was—well, I just can't explain it. I—I was sort of hypnotized."

"So that was why Jim decided to leave it all, eh?" Phronie asked with surprising shrewdness. "Duke Melbank has been tellin' it around that he seen you with him that night in Chicago, and you seemed kind o' stuck on him. I thought maybe Jim would have the sense to get you out of a mess like that."

"Yes," Silver said in a dull voice. "He wanted to get away because of me—partly. You see—he never seemed to realize that I was growin' up."

barn. She saw Roddy run his hand down one shining black shoulder, and observed that in the act there was compassion, affection. In his attitude toward herself, last night, she thought unhappily, there had been little more than chilly formality. He had been polite enough, it was true, but far from cordial.

Well, she would not bother him. This was her place, in a deeper sense that it could ever be his. It was too soon for her to make any plan, any pattern, for her life from now on. But for the time being she would remain here, let Roddy Willard bring home a hundred wives who disapproved of her. Whatever had been beautiful and unmarred in the spirit of Jim Grenoble was still here—the pure and inviolable ghost of the boy who had known this earth. She needed this land that held the very roots of her being—she needed it to obliterate forever the dread and insecurity and violence of that other life, and the memory of Gerald Lucas.

Roddy had brought the horses to the watering tank, and as he glanced up at her on the slope, she looked quickly away. Presently he came up the slope toward her with long, swinging strides.

In the suddenness of their encounter last night, she had not really seen Roddy, she thought. Now she observed him with a cool sense of detachment and indifference. His face was blunt-hewn, his cheekbones and brows prominent; although his gray eyes were deep-set and unsmiling, they were widely spaced so that the upper part of his face had a surprised, boyish look; his nose was high-bridged, and seemed almost square with its well-defined nostrils; his mouth above the obstinate jaw was unexpectedly mobile. He was darkly burned, and beads of perspiration margined his forehead. He gave her an odd smile.

"I came up here to apologize for the way I acted last night, Silver," he said, and seemed to hesi-



"Two Months Ago—I Thought I Wanted to Marry Him."

tate on her name. "If it isn't too late, I want to tell you how glad I am that you came straight here—to Sophronia."

He flushed a little, and Silver looked at him wonderingly. "Thank you," she said simply. "His mouth drew to a straight line. 'You are very polite,' he remarked. 'I didn't feel exactly polite toward you—last night I—well, I had other things on my mind.'"

"Of course," she said. "Phronie told me about it this morning. I hope you will be happy."

"Thanks," he looked away for a moment. "That was part of it, I admit. The rest can wait."

"You mean—about the land?"

"I don't want to trouble you with that business right away," he replied heavily. "But you'll probably want to sell and get your money out of it as soon as you can. The rent we've been paying isn't much. Phronie told me you said you want to stay here with her, but I don't believe you will for long. I don't think this sort of life will appeal to you."

She regarded him with darkly brooding eyes.

"You may as well be honest with me, Roddy," she said slowly, "even if you don't know me very well. You don't want me here, do you? I know you mean to be kind—and—and you feel sorry for me, and that sort of thing. But deep down—you resent my owning half this land. You resent my right to be here. And you are afraid of what your wife will think of me."

Roddy looked at her curiously, and strove to speak as he would to a child who was in error.

"I'll confess to your first charge," he said gravely, "up to a point. I've worked your father's land since I was a kid. I've always looked forward to the day when it would be my own property. I was afraid last night that I was going to lose it. But as for resenting your right to be here—I'm not quite as mean as that, Silver." He paused and looked away with misgiving as he sought for the right words in defense of Corinne. All morning the question of how she would accept Silver Grenoble had plagued him, to his shame. His doubts implied

a lack of trust in Corinne's generosity that was mortifying.

"And as for the girl I am going to marry," he resumed resolutely, "you wait until you meet her before you jump at any unfair conclusions. You are probably over-sensitive—" He halted, hating to put into words what was in his mind.

But Silver leaned back on her palms, threw back her head and uttered a dry little laugh.

"I know what I'm talking about, Roddy, never fear," she said softly. "I had one friend after another in boarding schools, until their mothers looked up my background. But for all that—" Her eyes widened brilliantly, and her full, sweet lips parted in a serene smile. "I wouldn't have given up one single day with my father."

"Everybody who knew him round here thought highly of him," Roddy said. "I'm sorry I never met him. Of course, I was only a boy then, and our farm was miles away from here."

Silver turned abruptly toward him. A change had come over her face, a guarded, secret look.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to speak of—of my life before I came here. I don't want you—any of you—to think that I've had a hard time of it. I—I really haven't. It was all splendid, in a way—but you would never understand that. But this—" She moved her hand lightly before her eyes and gazed down on the land below.

"—this is what I want now. I want to be here, where my father was happy. I don't think he ever really was—afterward. So you see you are quite wrong if you believe I won't want to stay."

Roddy thought of Duke Melbank and his mouth twisted in wry silence.

"Phronie," Silver went on, musingly, "probably didn't tell you what happened at the depot last night in Heron River, did she?"

He gave her a startled glance. "No. She didn't mention anything out of the ordinary."

"Well, you'll probably hear about it. I suppose it's the kind of thing that keeps a small town talking for a long time. But I'll tell you to prove to you that I'm not going to be scared away."

With ironical brevity she related the occurrence at the depot the evening before, while Roddy, under his tan, turned livid with wrath. He gave vent to an oath that shook his voice. Then he got abruptly to his feet and extended his hand to Silver.

"Come," he said harshly. "Let's go down to the house."

She stood for a moment looking coolly up into his eyes. "I know now," she said, "why Phronie didn't tell you. I don't think there's any use in your getting into a rage about that person. You see—people will just have to get used to me, Roddy. They can get used to anything."

"I'll use my own judgment about Duke Melbank," he replied blackly, and taking her arm he led her in silence down the slope to the house. Jason, meeting them in the yard, looked at his brother with a whimsical smile.

"Old Shad Finney just called up," he reported in his soft voice. "He thought maybe we'd like to know that Duke Melbank left town last night."

It was Jason, unfathomable and dark and silent, who drove Silver and Sophronia two days later on that last quiet errand for Gentleman Jim Grenoble. Without ritual or dirge, Jim's ashes were scattered into the open soil above Anna Grenoble's grave, and when the dark earth wound was closed again a single yellow poplar leaf drifted down upon it and lay as though sealing what was done.

Jason said, "Trees know."

On the day before Roddy was to leave for Ballantyne to marry Corinne Meader, Sophronia and Silver put up the last crisp curtain in the old house. The pine floors and moldings had been scrubbed white, the rag rugs washed, the horsehair sofa and settee in the sitting room treated with gasoline. Beds and bedding had been moved down from the big house, and other essentials had been bought in Heron River.

Sophronia went to the narrow stairwell that rose almost vertically from the kitchen and called to Silver. "Come down and have a bite of supper, Silver."

When Silver appeared, Sophronia glanced out the back door. "There's Roddy," she remarked, "goin' into that old shop of his. Wonder if he don't know it's supper time. He's been actin' awful funny today."

Silver was standing beside her at the open door. "I'd like to see the inside of Roddy's workshop," she said. "Do you suppose he'd mind if I went up now and called him to supper?"

"Like as not," Phronie replied with a tolerant smile. "He probably thought you weren't interested in it. He's got everything in saucers and little bags and glass jars—with tags and labels and fingers—till it would make you dizzy to look at 'em."

"His corn has won a number of prizes, though, hasn't it?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Along the Severn



Scene on the Severn River.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—W.N.U. Service.

TOWN after town, each with an interesting history, is threaded along the Severn river, which disputes with the Thames the title of England's longest stream.

The first town on the infant river is Llanidloes, and here one sees the old market halls which will be encountered in a pilgrimage along the Severn, and one, moreover, which still treasures its curfew bell.

Although the market hall is sadly in the way of modern traffic, making the approach from the upper Severn bridge to the main street narrow and dangerous, the adjacent streets are of ample width and pleasant avenues of trees. On market days, no doubt, the traffic is congested enough, for Llanidloes cattle and sheep markets are still important local events.

Farther down the valley, on the outskirts of Newtown, a large wooden hall by the roadside attracts attention. It is too large for the needs of a town of some 5,000 inhabitants and too far from the center of the town for everyday use. There is only one notice board to be seen, and that says, "Choirs only this way." Obviously, for choral festivals.

Even a small town like this can hope for the honor of staging the national festival, the Elsteddfod. Sometimes, as in this instance, it means providing a hall capable of accommodating an audience larger than the entire population of the town which built it; but it is done. The ceremony of the crowning of the bard takes place on an open hillside, for no building could accommodate the immense concourse of patriots who gather for that event.

Robert Owen was Born in Newtown. The most famous son of Newtown was Robert Owen, pioneer of co-operative stores. Born in 1771, he was also a pioneer, from the masters' side, of more humane factory legislation, at a time when the industrial revolution was at its most ruthless stage. He spent some time in the United States and worked to promote Anglo-American friendship. His birthplace has been pulled down, but the bank which now occupies the site, provided compensation by forming a memorial museum and library, including a reproduction of the room in which Owen was born.

Montgomery, the capital of the county of the same name, through which the Severn flows in Wales, lies a short distance away from the river, almost forgotten by the rush of modern life, dreaming peacefully of its troubled history. Its neighbor, Welshpool, takes the busy current of the present-day traffic.

Where Old Parr Lived. On the hillside near Middletown is Old Parr's cottage, where Thomas Parr lived in the reign of ten kings and queens of England. At the age of 152 he was taken to London to be exhibited to the king, Charles I, but died a few months later. The doctors, after a post-mortem examination, attributed his untimely death to this removal, for they reported: "In short, his inward parts appeared so healthy that if he had not changed his diet and air, he might perhaps have lived a good while longer." He continued his work as a farmer till he was 130 years old.

A few coracles, of a type familiar since the days of the ancient Britons, are still used by local fishermen. These oval boats are very light to carry, but clumsy to handle in the water. They are composed of a frame of wickerwork covered with skins or, nowadays, with oil-cloth.

The Severn still yields salmon to its fishermen, but not in such abundance as in days gone by, when an apprentice's indentures often contained a clause to prevent his master economizing by feeding him on fresh salmon more often than twice a week!

From Welshpool to Shrewsbury the country is very flat, so the Severn is here remarkable for nothing except its windings. Its first important tributary, the Vyrnwy, joins it as it enters England, in Shropshire. Near the Junction is a village so subject to floods that it was called locally "Melverly, God help 'em."

Since the Liverpool corporation

turned Lake Vyrnwy into a reservoir for part of their water supply, the floods have been to some slight extent under control.

Shrewsbury is Very Ancient. In one of the loops made by the Severn several miles farther down stands Shrewsbury, a town full of varied interest. There has been a settlement here at least since the sacking of the Roman city of Uricontium, six miles to the southeast in 594. Pengwern, as it was called, was for some time the capital of the kings of Powys, before the castle at Welshpool was built. The Saxons called the town Scrobshesbyrig, which time has mellowed into the present Shrewsbury.

When the Normans came they recognized what an ideal spot it was for defense, surrounded on all sides by the river except where a steep rock closed the gap. The Conqueror entrusted the building of the castle to his kinsman, Roger de Montgomery, and this building has been restored recently and presented to the town out of the profits made by Shrewsbury's famous flower show—the arts of peace thus rescuing a relic of war.

Shrewsbury, like Banbury, is also noted for its cakes, and one shop owes its fame to the mention of its name by a minor poet. In "The Ingoldsby Legends" the story is told of a local bluebird. The heroine gets past the ferocious dog who guards the chamber of horrors by feeding him on the contents of her basket. "She has given him a Shrewsbury cake of Pallen's own make," and the successor of that worthy confectioner still finds that line his own best advertisement.

In the stirring days of border warfare, Shrewsbury held the responsible office of the northern warden of the marches, with Ludlow, on the tributary Teme, taking equal responsibility at the southern end.

Besides its border warfare, Shrewsbury witnessed one critical fight in English history, the battle which is familiar to all lovers from Shakespeare's description of it in "Henry IV." The turning point in this conflict was the death of Hotspur, which Falstaff himself claimed to have compassed after a duel lasting "a long hour by Shrewsbury clock."

Shakespeare permits himself almost as much poetical license as he allows his mock-valliant knight in giving the glory to Prince Hal. The prince was but fifteen at the time, and although he came fresh from helping to defend his title of Prince of Wales, and not from tavern revelry, and although he fought bravely in this, his first pitched battle, he would have been no match for his doughty opponent, a tough veteran of thirty-nine. Sober history records that Percy Hotspur was not slain until he was completely surrounded by his foes.

As the rebels proposed to divide the kingdom into three parts, their victory would probably have put back the clock of English history for at least a century.

Home of Two Famous Men. Shrewsbury's most famous son, Darwin, began another kind of battle—a battle of ideas—with his theory of evolution; and, although the battle ground is changing, the fight he commenced still goes on. A statue to his memory stands in front of the old grammar school, now the public library.

Near the Old Market hall stands a statue to another famous son of Shropshire, Lord Clive, who helped to lay the foundations of British rule over India.

The old Roman road, Watling street, crossed the Severn a few miles lower down, near Wroxeter, and turned southward, toward South Wales, another branch running northward toward Chester. Just behind Wroxeter are the ruins of the important Roman city, Uricontium, or Viroconium. The excavations prove it to have been of considerable size, larger than Pompeii, though not as rich in treasures.

South and west of Wroxeter rises the long slope of Wenlock Edge, celebrated in song, with the delightful ruins of Wenlock Abbey nestling beneath it. To the east of Wroxeter, the Wrekin, 1,335 feet high, gains by its solitude a dignity to which its height alone would not entitle it. Remains of a British camp can be clearly traced on its summit, and the panorama it commands is a fine one.

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Smiles

AS SHE IS SPOKE

Teacher—I am very disappointed in the way your son, Jimmy, talks. Only today he said: "I ain't never went nowhere."

Father—He did? Why, the young whelp has done traveled twice as far as most kids his age.—Successful Farming.

A Friendly Suggestion

"I want to speak to you as one of the plain people."

"Don't do it," replied Farmer Corn-tassel. "You want to realize that times have changed and a prosperous agriculturist looks on himself as somebody rather special."

No Doubt About It

Bjcz—Bragley says his house is heated with hot air.

Bjorn—Then it's well heated. I know Bragley.—Pathfinder Magazine.

Putting on the Looks

"Why do you always look so gloomy?"

"A gloomy man avoids many a hard luck tale."

